



DHS Matters!

Michigan Department of Human Services • Lansing, Michigan • October 15, 2007

Produced by DHS Office of Communications, Suite 1510, Grand Tower, Lansing

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Wayne County banquet shows appreciation for foster, adoptive and kinship parents

From Violetta Lane

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Love, determination and gratitude prevailed for the staff at Wayne County Department of Human Services Central Operations district during an event celebrating the support we get from foster, adoptive and kinship parents.

Due to budgetary restrictions, the annual foster, adoptive and kinship parents appreciation banquet had to be cancelled in May, when it was originally scheduled as part of Foster Parent Appreciation Month. However, that did not stop the staff at DHS-Central Operations who donated funds for bake sales and casual days to raise money for the appreciation banquet.

Instead, a gala affair was held June 23 at the Detroit district office to honor DHS foster, adoptive and kinship parents. The event also celebrated awards for caregivers and foster parents. Congratulations to:

■ Foster Parent of the Year, Dinia Nobles, who addressed the gathering and spoke about her joys of caring for older youths in foster care.

■ Kinship Parents of the Year Richard & Janice Powell.

■ Medically Fragile Foster Parent of the Year Denise Martin.

■ Outstanding Caregivers Lieutenant & Nicole Ivy and Mrs. Willie Martin.



Above: Foster parent of the year Dinia Nobles and licensing specialist Violetta Lane of Wayne County CFS.

Right: Richard and Janice Powell, who were recognized by Wayne County as kinship parents of the year.



The atmosphere was festive with decorations provided by staff and musical renditions provided by the Courville Youth Community Concert Choir.

The keynote speaker was inspirational Wayne County Family Court Referee Richard L. Smart III with encouraging words about the way our children are, "Succeeding against the odds." Core City Neighborhoods, Inc. donated and prepared the meal for the entire function.

Wayne County CFS offices oversee services delivered to about 6,100 of the 19,000-plus foster children under DHS care.

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Been there, done that

Near state shutdown not a first in the Great Lakes State

■ Some material paraphrased from Jackson Citizen-Patriot story published Sept. 30, 2007

The threat of a government shutdown loomed as a large crowd gathered near Jackson eager to hear from the men elected to represent them in Lansing. Jackson's state senator had this to say: "Michigan's finances are obviously chaotic in view of all the bickering and threatened suspension of state services. I think the people are just about ready to revolt if the Legislature does not soon provide a solution."

This wasn't 2007; the year was 1959. The 1950s had been a boom time in Michigan, a tumultuous time with a popular Democratic governor and repeated clashes with a Republican-led Senate. Unemployment was low, the state's economy relied heavily on the auto industry, and out front was a governor nicknamed "Soapy" – G. Mennen Williams. As the decade came to a close and state government grew, revenues did not keep pace, and the constitution allowed the state to only borrow \$250,000.

Then-Gov. Williams proposed a 13 percent increase in general expenditures like education and mental health and pushed for implementation of an income tax to solve the more-than-\$100 million deficit. The Republican-led Senate soundly rejected the idea and instead pushed to boost the state sales tax.

Williams and Republicans continued to fight over which type of tax would best resolve the state's problems. Williams set the first payless payday on May 7 and nearly 27,000 state employees didn't receive paychecks. Lansing's cash spigot was shut off for other expenditures as well. Williams said the needs of the aged, blind and poor would be given priority. Eventually, Williams realized there was no hope of an income tax passing, and he signed a Senate plan he previously disagreed with that freed up formerly restricted funds to make the state payroll. Later that summer, the Republicans got the sales tax boost they wanted.

Zoom to Sept. 28, 2007. Most DHS employees received an afternoon layoff notice effective Oct. 1 unless a new state budget is implemented before the new fiscal year starts at 12:01 a.m. on Oct. 1. The issue: the governor and Legislature disagree on how to resolve a \$1.75 billion state budget deficit. An agreement reached at 4:30 a.m. by the governor and Legislature limited Michigan's government shutdown to 4 ½ hours of late night time on Oct. 1, after which DHS employees were recalled to work. An interim budget is effective during October while the Legislature turns its attention to the regular full-year appropriations bills, which are in conference committee.

Other states have faced similar showdowns and shutdowns at the beginning of new fiscal years this century. Pennsylvania closed for a day earlier this year, New Jersey closed for two weeks in 2006, Minnesota closed for two weeks in 2005, and Tennessee closed for three days in 2002 – all caused by disagreements similar to the one here.



Autumn brings outstanding award for Fall

DHS employee Dean Fall honored during 25-year celebration

From Dennis Szagesh, Program Manager
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Dean Fall, an adult services specialist at Ogemaw DHS, has given 33 years of service to the department. Dean attended the 25th anniversary celebration for Hospice of Helping Hands at the Ogemaw Heights High School in September and was completely surprised to receive the organization's Founder's Award at the event.

The following summary was provided by Debbie Bills, clinical program director for Hospice of Helping Hands, which serves clients in a six-county area:

"In the late 1970s, Dean Fall was a young social worker assigned to the Roscommon County Department of Social Services. After hearing that a local group was researching the feasibility of opening a hospice to serve the terminally ill patients of northern Michigan, he willingly began to attend the planning meetings.

"Shortly thereafter, Dean was reassigned to Ogemaw County and began attending similar planning meetings to open a hospice in that county. The hospice became incorporated in the fall of 1982 as 'Hospice of Helping Hands'. Dean was named as one of the founding board members.

"Since that day, he has been the only person to serve continuously on the board of directors for Hospice of Helping Hands. Some of those years he served as the president, although more frequently, he served as the vice-president. Most importantly, Dean was always an advocate for the patient and family whenever policies and decisions had to be discussed.

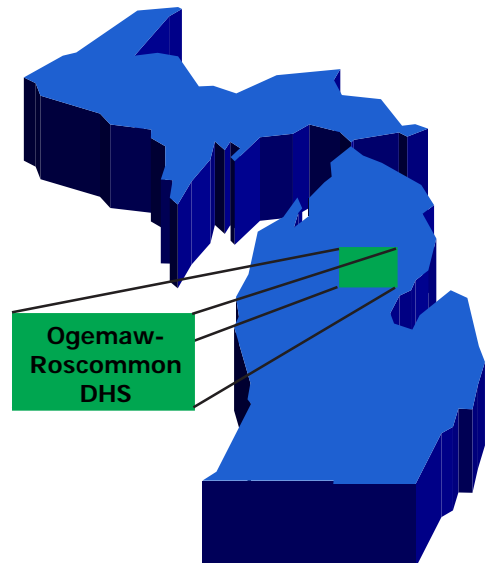
"During the (Sept. 22) banquet, Dean Fall was presented with The Founder's Award. Mr. Fall expressed surprise and humble gratitude for the award, stating that his service for hospice has always been one of the highlights of his career and has become even more dear to his heart in recent months as the hospice he helped to develop served some of his own family members.

"He is very proud of the organization and what it has become during his tenure as a board member. Dean truly demonstrates the heart of social work."

We are all very proud of Dean and of this recognition bestowed upon him - it couldn't have come to a more deserving person!



Dean Fall, an adult services specialist at Ogemaw DHS, receives The Founder's Award during the 25th anniversary celebration for Hospice of Helping Hands at the Ogemaw Heights High School in September.





Ken Visser (seated left) received the President's Award at the Michigan Home-Based Family Services Association conference in Frankenmuth on Sept. 27. He received this honor along with Monty Sharobeem, former CEO of Judson Center, and Carl Latona, former CEO of Highfields, also pictured. They were honored for their vision and foresight in establishing the association as an organization to support home-based services through training and sharing of expertise. "Ken was deputy director of children's services in Oakland County during fiscal year 2007, where he consistently advocated for serving children in their homes whenever that was possible," Margaret Warner, director of Oakland County DHS, said. This year was the 20th anniversary for Lansing-based Michigan Home-Based Family Services Association, whose mission is to strengthen families and communities through the advocacy, education and promotion of family-centered, home-based service delivery.

– from Shelley Miller-O'Neill

Sorry! There were no letters in time for this issue. Customer letters praising employees are very popular with other employees. To submit a customer letter (or a story) for publication:

1. Ensure your supervisor knows about this and approves.
2. If a client sent the letter, have them sign a Consent for Publication form, which is downloadable from the MS Word template as form 0199.dot
3. Obtain the verbal permission of everyone named in the letter before sending it for publication; obtain the verbal permission of letter writers that are not clients.
3. Send the letter and a copy of the signed consent form to me by fax to 517-373-8471 or send it by email to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov
4. Include the letter writer's hometown and the job classification(s) of the employee(s) cited in the letter.

If there are any questions about the letter after that I will contact you. Please contact me if you have any questions about submitting a letter or a story for publication. *Thank you!*

Larry VanDeSande

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